

THE
STATE
OF
BLESSEDNESS.

By W. W. M. A. and Chaplain, to a
Person of Honour.

Published at the request of a Person of Quality.



L O N D O N.

Printed for *Tho. Parkhurst*, and are to be sold at the Bible
and Three Crowns in *Cheapside* near *Menters Chappell*,
and at the Bible on *London Bridge* under the Gate, 1681.

Harvard College Library
Gift of
Friends of the Library
March 26, 1949

1000000

Printed by Wm. L. Ashurst, and are to be sold at the Bible
and Three Crowns in Chancery near Lincoln's Chapel
and at the Bible on London Bridge under the Gate, 1681.

TO THE
RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

Sir John Roberts

BARONETT.

SIR,

Here is your Request; and I
with that you do not Re-
pent you of it; That you
do not discover greater failings by
deliberate Reading, then you did in
the transient Hearing of this dis-
course. It hath received some en-
largement and alteration since I
Preach'd it, and not without need;
for the Truth is, the Subject was too
great for me, and handled in too
much hast. The Sermon being the
immature conception of those few

A 2

hours,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

hours, which that weeks exercise afforded me.

Sir, I am much afraid it will never answer that esteem you was pleased to express for it, but if it may be (in any degree) serviceable toward your attainment of the Glory it treats of, I shall be abundantly honoured and recompensed, for thus exposing my self. The hopes whereof is the greatest motive and encouragement to this bold attempt of

Sir,

Your most humble

and most obliged Servant,

W. W.



COLOSSIANS 1. 12.

The Saints in Light.

NOT to trouble you with more then barely my Thoughts upon this expreffion, we shall confider the Saints in a double capacity.

1. As they are the sincere members of the Militant Church here on Earth. And,
2. As they are the glorified members of the Church Triumphant in Heaven.

The Light in which the Saints Militant dwell; and by which they steer and direct their lives, is the Gospel of our Saviour, whereof Light is a proper Character; for it's plainness and perspicuity in all things necessary to be known: For the discoveries it hath made of Life and immortality, which were either hidden from foregoing ages, or but obscurely and mystically revealed; for unvailling *Moses's* face, both explaining the designed difficulties of the Law, and unfolding it from those thicker shrouds of darkness, wherein humane Tradition, and the false glosses of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had enwrapt it. For opening to us a prospect and insight into some parts and perfections of Religion and Vertue, which Nature and the Law were ignorant of: For delivering the History of the Son of God, who is that true Essential Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the World. And lastly, For the concurrence sake of the

Holy Spirit, which always attends the Gospel to enlighten and direct the understandings, of those that by a modest and conscientious diligence and enquiry, search and labour after saving knowledge.

But secondly, The Saints considered in a higher capacity, Triumphant with God in Heaven, I purpose for my present Theme, as I suppose them to have been design'd by the Apostle in the Words before us. Whereupon I shall not attempt to Landskip Heaven, or describe that inaccessible light which neither eye hath seen, nor the thoughts of man conceiv'd; but only sum up to you what God hath reveal'd, what the understanding of man is able to think of it, and what conclusions we may reasonably gather, of our future happiness, by reflecting upon our present wants: Still keeping within the bounds of the Text, and the metaphorical importance of the expression, and as 'tis counterpos'd to that figurative darkness which in Scripture, we so often read of.

Light then (as 'tis used for that State of Blessedness which the Saints enjoy) is a term of infinite comprehension, and concludes in it all the good, all the joy, all the perfection that go to the making up of Heaven. For,

1. Sight is the most delicate and pleasureable of the senses, as *Salomon* testifies, *Prov. 15. 30. The Light of the Eyes rejoiceth the Heart.*: And so the same Author, *Ecclesiast. 1. 7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun.* That to describe Heaven by Vision, intimates it to be a state of exquisite delights and pleasures; and those pleasures (like light) are pure and refined; and such undoubtedly they are, being purged from the gross mixtures of lust and sensuality, and adapted to the chaste desires of sanctified Spirits, and the Holy appetites of unvitiated Reason. They are quite of another nature, then those so-did and unmanly pleasures, wherewith the carnal world entertain their degenerate inclinations; nay they are abstracted from those defects and imperfections, drawn off from those dregs, that (in this life) taint and imbitter the most rational delights of the wisest and best of men. They

are under no restraints of size and measure, but infinitely a-
 bound: they are not checkt by the fears of excess in the
 enjoyment, for they are as innocent as delightful: They
 are not such luscious sweets as satiate the appetites of those
 that tast them, but at the same time both fulfil their desires,
 and enlarge them: these are ingenuous and heroick plea-
 sures, consisting in the perfection of Wisdom, and Love,
 and Holiness, those charms and graces of glorified souls,
 in the vision and inseparable enjoyment of God, their cheif-
 est and most desirable object in the acquaintance and fel-
 lowship of the glorious company of the Apostles, the good-
 ly society of the Prophets, the noble Army of Martyrs, and
 of all the bravest Worthies of the World. Oh! What an
 eternal rapture of Joy must it needs prove for these Blessed
 Souls. These dearest Friends, to meet in the same place,
 to be concentred in the same happiness, to be link'd toge-
 ther in mutual affections and embraces, never to know sor-
 row nor discord, nor parting again. These are harmless
 but most charming pleasures; pleasures fit to entertain great
 and generous minds, that favour not of Earth and sensuality;
 Pleasures that unconceivably delight and ravish, but leave
 neither guilt nor sting behind them: Pleasures so constant and
 successive that they shall leave no room for a moments unhap-
 piness to interpose, and so endless and immortal, that they shall
 never expire, nor give place to a worse succession. Such vast
 advantages have they of those soul-some and nauseous Lusts,
 which carnal Dotards rate above their souls, and for which
 they barter them, that it is their great perfection to bend
 thing like them; For the joy of Heaven, the felicity of Saints,
 is without measure, without alloy, without sin, without
 intermission, and without end. Even the innocent Plea-
 sures of good men, are (in this World) subject to be
 baw'ke and daunted, and the great care and pains where-
 by they are first obtained and then secur'd, is a mighty
 abatement to them; but it is not the least happiness of Saints,
 that when they dye in the Lord, they rest from their La-
 bours. Those sick and short-lived joys that the world affords,
 are so inconsiderable, that the cost and travail of acquiring
 them

them, generally exceed the purchase: But those that the Saints enjoy are as cheap as day-light, and come freely in without their seeking: all pains and forecasts are there superseded, by the satisfactory provisions that God hath prepared, and the reposed contentment of their own minds. They have no hungry, importunate appetites to care and purvey for, they have no shameful nakedness to cloath, and cover; they are many degrees above the scorplings of the Sun by day, and the pale and chilly influences of the Moon by Night; and therefore they need not be at the trouble to raise Fortifications against extremity of Weather, to erect Booths and plant gourds to shelter from the heat, nor to Build, Repair and Alter, to guard the tender senses from the injurious Elements, — *quibus sollicitis fervet Respublica curis*, for at this rate the world purchase and ensure their Health, and Ease, and Pleasure: But the Blessed are advanced to those calm and pleasant Regions, where none of those Storms and Troubles, none of those straights and extremities, none of those changes and uncertainties, which discompose this lower world, (and so busie the hands and thoughts of men, to prevent or remove them) can make their approaches, but they inhabit those mansions of eternal rest, that are exempted from all disturbance and uneasiness; and even the very fears of any, where Fortune and inconstancy have nought to do: And what need can there be of their labour or thoughtfulness, when there is nothing wanting which they have not, neither any wast or decay of what they have; but all things they enjoy are (like the house in which they dwell) made to their hands, nay made without hands, eternal in the Heavens?

And then for those spiritual joys which the Righteous, in this Life, Taste (and yet they do but taste them) how hardly do they come by them! What an host of difficulties must they break through ere they can attain them? They must abjure the pleasures of the World, sacrifice their most endeared interests, stem the current of nature, deny the cravings of sense and inclination, repent and mourn, Watch and Pray, conquer Sin and Devils, and strictly

and strictly tie themselves up to the rigorous observance of all the Laws of God (that are so irksome to flesh and blood) before they can tell what Peace of Conscience or Joy in the Holy Ghost mean. For those Raptures and Transports, those sudden flashes of Light and Joy, which sometimes possess the minds of bad men, who never paid so dear for them, are but counterfeit and Enthusiastick: But the joys of Heaven tide themselves into the souls of the Blessed, without their trouble and pains to dig a current for them: There's nothing lies in the way betwixt them and their happiness that may either hinder their enjoyment, or be troublesome to remove: They have no sins to repent of, no headstrong Wills to break and subdue, no wild unruly Passions to tame, no evils, no Temptations to Watch and Pray against, *ne voto opus erit*, all the difficulties of Religion are there made void and abrogated: God abates them all the duties they owe to him, but the chearful services of Thanksgiving and Praise, and takes them off from all they owe to Men (making void Relations, and setting Kings and Subjects, Fathers and Children, Masters and Servants, the Rich and Poor, the Aged and the Infant, upon the same level) except the endearing and grateful duties of Love and Union. Thus the Saints enjoy their Pleasures in perfect ease and rest, and have nothing at all to do (either for Souls or Bodies) but to be happy.

But there's one Thought more in the notion of rest which should not be omitted, because it so raises and enlivens the pleasure of Saints, and gives them an advantage of happiness above Angels themselves. Rest presupposes labour, labour that's past and over; and how will the sense and memory of what they did and endur'd, add to the bliss they now enjoy! What a new Heaven will it be to consider, the World they went through, and the Hell they escap'd! How will it enhance their Joy, to recount their troubles! How will it set off the state of Glory to compare it with the miseries of this sinful World! Oh! How will they bless themselves to reflect, by what narrow escapes,

B

through

through what hardships and dangers, with what struggles and conflicts, in what Agonies of despair and hope, in what a deluge of sweat and tears, with what bitter cries and strong desires their poor souls at last arrived safe, into the Bosom of their rest and refuge, never to return to know the like again !

2. Light and Dominion are sometimes in Scripture promiscuously used for one another, thus said Holy David in his last speech, when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, *He that Ruleth over men, — Shall be as the Light of the Morning* : 2 Sam. 23. 3, 4. So when Jeroboam wrested the ten Tribes out of the hands of Solomon, God thus promised for Davids sake, *Unto his Son will I give one Tribe that David my Servant may have a Light*, (i. e. one to heir his Throne) *always before me in Jerusalem*, 1 Kings 11. 36. And on the other hand the Psalmist says, *That God made great Lights, the Sun to Rule by Day, and the Moon to Rule by Night*. And I am sure the state of the Blessed is a State of Dominion and Sovereignty, as well as Light, whether the expression intend so much or no : And therefore it is called a Kingdom and a Crown of Glory, and the Saints are entitled Kings, and are said to Reign with Christ. Kings they are in the Rule and Government of that mighty Empire of their own Minds; a Power greater then that of all the Kings of the Earth, who are not able to give Laws to any one soul.

Now the Glory of a Kingdom is Peace, to be secure from all invasions and encroachments from abroad, and from Rebellions and Mutinies at home ; and this is the happy condition of Crowned Spirits. Devils may roar and envy to see their greatness and glory, which they cannot hinder nor deface, bad men may spight them, but they cannot hurt them : Those damned Spirits, that plagued and persecuted them in the World, may vex and torment themselves and broyl in the heat of their own disappointed malice, but though they curse and rage, the gates of Hell cannot prevail :

vail : There's no access to any thing that's Evil; *Lazarus* is safe from *Dives's* revenge : There's a great Gulf (the irreversible decree of God) between them ; and that which confirms the Misery of the one, secures the peace and happiness of the other.

And then in Heaven, There's an universal peace throughout the Royal Neighbourhood, God is perfectly reconciled to every one of them, and they to one another : They are all united in an infrangible League of eternal Friendship and Alliance ; and are so nearly concerned for each others VVelfare and Honour, and their interests so mingled and comb'd, that no one of them could be happy if any one of them should not be so. That there's no fear of a breach among themselves, whose mutual dependencies make them infallibly secure of one another.

Lastly, Every soul is happy in the Government of it self, and settles all its faculties in peace and order.

Death ends the great controversie between the Flesh and Spirit, and those affections that would sometimes revolt and lean to the wrong side, shall be perfectly reduc'd and become faithful : There shall be no more bitter chidings between an enraged, injured Conscience, and a Tyrannous arbitrary Will. The warm disputes between Faith and Reason shall be stated and determin'd : The conflicts between Hope and Fear shall have an end, and all the jars and contradictions of our cross and perverse passions shall be laid aside : Every faculty shall comply and yield to the Government of Reason, and there shall be no dissention, no Schism in the Soul ; Oh ! Happy is that State with which neither God nor man hath any quarrel, happy that Church where the Head and every Member are inseparably joynted and sinew'd together, by Unity and Concord ; happy that Man that is reconciled to God, in Charity withal Men, and at Peace in his own Conscience : If you can fancy any bliss in these, (and I wish that our experience may teach us of this Nation to understand them all) then conceive

how incomparably happy the Saints are ; and how desirable a place the Kingdom of Heaven is ; where blessed Peace-makers are they all !

3. By Light we may understand Liberty, as it's opposite is taken for restraint, *St. Peter*, and *St. Jude* tell us that the laps'd Angels are imprison'd in chains of Darkness till the day of Judgment, and the Prophet *Isaiah* foretold that the *Messiah* should be for a Light to the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind, and to bring them that sit in darkness, out of the Prison house, *Isaiah* 42. 6, 7. Where darkness and Prison-house signify the same thing, viz. A restraint of Mind, a narrowness of understanding : So we say of a Recluse (a man of close retirement) that he dwells in darkness, that he does not see the Light ; as if he had not eye-room, not space enough to look about him, but light is a spacious thing and of a vast extent and therefore a proper Metaphor to express Liberty by.

Now the Liberty of Saints consist in the Freedom of of Thought and Action, and enjoyment, a latitude to do and think their own pleasure : Not that Heaven is a lawless place of Sin and disorder, and Tolleration : But every man is a Law to himself, whose soul is grown to a perfection like that of God, and capable of Willing, of Thinking, of doing nothing but what is innocent and good, what becomes that sacred place and company, what suits with the Majesty of God (in whose immediate presence they are) and the chaste unfully'd purity of their own minds : And therefore to do what they please, is to do what they ought : For they can neither do nor take pleasure in any thing but what is excellent and holy ; and to these they have all the freedom they can wish.

When we frail Mortals attempt any thing that is good and worthy, what rubs do we meet with ? What difficulties lie in our way ? What checks do we feel in our natures ? What dullness and irksomeness in our Flesh ? How dubi-

delicately and cowardly we go about it; as if we were afraid to displease our corrupt natures, or disoblige the wicked one, by any thing that's good and virtuous! How do we resolve, and then repent! How tremblingly do we put forth our hand, which withers in the motion, and then we recall it into our bosome! How importunately doth the flesh press us to forbear! How doth Satan crowd something else into our thoughts! How are our lusts alarm'd, and stand up in their own defence as if they were injuriously dealt with and betray'd! Thus when we would do Good, Evil is present with us, when we would break Prison, and get away from these restraints, our fetters hang at our feet, we run in chains the race that is set before us; and are in constant danger to fall and be overtaken. The flesh is a continual weight upon our Spirits, and either sinks us into the puddle of base thoughts, and foul degenerate actions, or at least keeps us dull and heartless, lazy and slow in our nobler undertakings and pursuits. That as long as we carry this load of Clay about us, we must expect to find it troublesome and untoward, to every thing that is spiritual and sublime. *David proposed well, Psal. 119. 32. I will run the way of thy Commandments,* but then as if he had been stoppt, as if the flesh had bid him stand, he remembered that his Soul was under the Arrest of the Body, and adds a Condition to the Promise, *When thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

It is not only backward it self to all good motions, but encumbers the mind with a multitude of engagements, brings it into a necessary acquaintance with the VWorld, and is apt to endanger and betray it into excess and dotage; and how hard a thing is it to have much to do with the VWorld and be innocent! How hard to use it as not abusing it! How hard to want it and not to cover it! How hard to possess it and not be endear'd to it! It is apt to cling to our thoughts and to stick and fasten upon our affections: It will strangely grow and encroach upon us; it will insinuate it self into our very Souls, and become as great a Master there as God himself, and at length engross all our devoirs; for no man can serve God and Mammon.

But the Blessed Saints have none of this Dirt upon their heels, they are not stak't and fastned to the Earth, nor embodied and streightn'd in these Tabernacles of Clay; but they are freer then Air and as active as Angels; they have no engagements to call them off from Duty, nor any intruding lusts to disturb them at it: They have no peevish dissatisfi'd Passions to contradict what their Reason proposes, nor such awkward unweildy constitutions as we have, to protradit heir designs, or spoil and bungle them in the execution: Their Consciences forbid them nothing that their wills incline to, neither are their actions bawk'd and bounded by Law, or impotence: But they are free to do every thing that is either their duty or delight (without regret or fear in themselves, without gainfaying and reproof from any other, without defect and imperfection in the Act it self) after the best and most accomplish't manner.

And now are we not asham'd by this time, of what many senseless wretches among us (but Saints if you will take them in their own Language) impudently prophane these glorious names of light and liberty with? The carnal desires of the flesh, the vitious inclinations of corrupt nature, that deserve (and were wont to own) no better a name then Lust, they call Light, because they Pimp, and direct them through the paths of darkness to their shameful practices; so shameful that modesty would leave them nameless, and yet they impudently call them Liberty: Though as St. Paul calls them, they are the very bondage of corruption the most fordid slavery in the VWorld. But they that dub their Lusts by the name of Light, and their vices by that of Liberty, deserve to be unnam'd, unchristian'd themselves; another profession would besit them better, an *Alcoran* would more become them then the Bible; for there they will be match'd with a debauch't Prophet and a beastly Paradise, to their debauch't and beastly Religion. But the liberty of Saints is an unrestrained power to render themselves as Holy and Perfect, and (therein) as happy as glorious, as 'tis possible for humane nature to be.

4. Light and darkness are often used for Life and Death, so often that I need not instance: For Life and Death, and all their attendants that wait upon them and administer unto them.

The Life of Saints is a life indeed, exempted both from the cause and symptoms of mortality. Sin that usher'd Death into this World, shall never gain admittance into the next, the Blessed who have outliv'd it's poison, are now above it's influence, all their former sins are pardon'd and forgotten, and their souls eternally secur'd from renewing them: The possibility of sinning is taken away, and all propensions to it lost and bury'd in the Grave. A Saint cannot think of Sin but with horror and indignation, he cannot see Temptation in it, nor will the Devil himself have the confidence to propose it. Temptations were not prepared for any Life but this, where every Condition is tedious and tiresome, and poor uneasie mortals are willing to turn every way for rest, and to close with any thing that hath but the face of pleasure and diversion: that the wonder is not so great if some be baited and befool'd into their own ruine. But Heaven is a place of that satisfaction and delight, that nothing like an argument can be offer'd for a change: Nothing can be propos'd so tempting as what they enjoy, those glories are so incomparably surpassing, that the subtle Spirit can think of nothing like them. So then Heaven hath not one hole for sin to enter at; but it shall descend into the dark Regions from whence it came, there to remain for ever. And if sin be routed, none of its black Guard, none of its dismal effects shall stay behind; Sorrow shall be a stranger to all. Hearts, and Tears to all Eyes, Diseases and Anguish shall have no ill humors to work upon, Death shall have no claim to our Lives, because we shall not sin to forfeit them; our bodies shall be rais'd glorious, and immortal, fit for eternal conjunction with glorify'd Spirits, fit for the Society of Angels, and Communion with their Maker, prepared for eternity, extract'd from every thing that's fading and corruptible; delicately made up in wonderful

derful Beauty and Splendor, to attract and entertain the Holy Love and Admiration of all that see them; curiously temper'd with exquisite sence, for the delicious relish of pure and refined pleasures: How unconceivable then shall the joys of that enlightened state be, when the ignobler part of man, the gross and Elementary substance of our Bodies, this sordid lump of corrupt Flesh, which here the soul in time grows weary of, and lays aside as an ungrateful burden; shall (at the great day) rise out of its ashes a Spiritual Body, bedeck with Light, and Glory, and Immortality.

5. The felicities of a glorified state are call'd Light, because they principally consist in Vision and Knowledge. The Understanding is the noblest faculty of the Mind: And the infinite improvements, the perfect illumination, the enlarging and fulfilling the capacities of it; the settling it in its Empire, and Government of the Soul; the setting it upon objects worthy of its Contemplation, the adapting those objects to its Apprehensions; or rather raising it's conceptions to such infinite heights, that it may be capable of reaching and fathoming the profoundest Mysteries; the strengthening its powers, that it may be able to look upon and consider the most Glorious lustre's, without dazzling or being confounded; these make up (in a great measure) the happiness of Souls: And therefore it is often express'd by seeing of God and seeing of his Kingdom, and seeing his Glory, &c. And this is the felicity of the Saints, that they shall have a full sight, an open view of all that's glorious, and know all things that make for their Everlasting Comfort and Satisfaction.

But that you may the better understand the nature of this Beatifick Vision, Consider,

1. What it is that the Saints shall know, And,
 2. After what manner.
1. What it is that the Saints shall know I have told you in

in general, that they shall know every thing that may confirm or increase their Joy : And if we could tell particularly what they know, *Bonum esset nobis*, &c. It were good for us to be Here ; and we should enjoy a Heaven as well as they. . We may make a general imperfect judgement of what they know, but to give you a distinct account of all that comes within the vast comprehension of their inlightned Thoughts, is a work as much above a man, as the Saints are in Glory above us. And they whose souls have been taken up to the habitations of the Blessed, with purposes that they might return again, have lost those Visions by the way, as not fit to be brought down to the notices of men, being so infinitely beyond the fathom of their Reason. St. Paul who was wrap't up to the Regions of Glory, what a broken account doth he give, of what he there saw and heard ? 2 Cor. 12. 2. &c. *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the Body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the Body, I cannot tell : God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third Heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the Body, or out of the Body, I cannot tell : God knoweth) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable Words, which it is not lawful or possible for a man to utter. No wonder he could not retain the Vision, when he had thus lost himself.*

St. John was (of all the inspired Penmen) pickt out on purpose to take a view of the New Jerusalem, and to give the World a description of it : Yet how imperfect is his model ? How does his Relation favour of Earth ? What gross and Elementary materials hath he chosen to describe it by ; as Gold and Pearl, and pretious Stones ? Into what a narrow compass hath he contracted the infinite dimensions of it ? The height, and length, and breadth equally twelve thousand Furlongs, and all this to shape and little it to our understandings, to represent it to the esteem of mortals in such a form, so furnish't and adorn'd, made up of such materials, as are most pretious and valuable in the Eyes of Men, and in such low expressions as reason is capable of

apprehending. Because our short sight can discern but a little way, therefore this infinite World is thus represented in a Map, drawn in Little, and delineated (to use the Apostles own phrase) *according to the measure of a Man, Rev. 21.* No our understandings are too contracted, while they are bound up in these bundles of Flesh, to consider the amazing glory and lustre of those heavenly Mansions, that incomprehensible Light in which the Saints for ever dwell. Yet something may be guest at, something that may raise our desires, something that may stir the Affections, and make us Covetous and Ambitious, zealously concern'd to know what they know, and to partake of those Blessed sights, which fill their souls with so much Pleasure and Contentment, and that we might perhaps do by these Three Rules.

First. What God hath Revealed.

Secondly. What we are ignorant of.

Thirdly. What wise men, in their best Thoughts, most desire to know.

That which God hath revealed to us concerning another Life, seems rather an account of what he intends we shall know hereafter, then a design that we should understand it now. What was imperfectly signifi'd by the Law, was reserved for the clearer discovery of the Gospel, and to what the Gospel hints, but comes short in, Eternity shall reveal.

2. Those mysteries the Gospel treats of in a sence above our understanding, our understanding shall be enlighten'd and taught to know.

3. The Soul of man (when 'tis suffered to be free and serious) hath a natural aim at its own happiness, and will be looking (as far as it can) into those things that concern its peace, and thirsting after the knowledge of Divine matters, it cannot attain to: And it is but reasonable to think that it shall

shall be gratify'd in this Holy curiosity, otherwise we cannot suppose it happy. But to examine these general Rules no further, I shall venture to descend to some particular instances of the knowledge of Saints in Light: And they are these.

1. They know themselves.
2. They know each other. And,
3. They know God.

1. They know themselves; a knowledge that men are strangely wanting in our Bodies, that we are best acquainted with, have many hidden parts, many unaccountable motions, many occult qualities, that neither we that bear them, nor they that study them are able to solve and discover. But for souls, which are the seat of knowledge; all we know of them is, that they are we know not what, that there is such a principle working in us we experience by the effects; that it is an immortal being, it hath owned it self to some Philosophers that have examin'd it, to which truth the Word of God hath given more infallible Testimony. But for its substance and perfection, its seat and residence, and the manner of its operations, these are Problems we are wont to discourse, but can come to no determinate conclusion about. But the Saints are perfect in the knowledge of themselves; a knowledge so excellent that some Philosophers have accounted it the greatest wisdom. I shall only instance in such things wherein much of their felicity consists, and not in that thred-bare knowledge (if there be any such in Heaven) which is only curious and speculative. The Saints then know,

1. Their own Excellencies. And,
2. Their own happiness.

1. They know their own Excellencies, things that we are not only ignorant of, but much mistaken in: If we knew our selves, we should value our selves more, and be-

have our selves better. We should not prostitute our souls to every base lust, that courts and importunes us; nor sell them at such an under rate as the vanities of the world. VVe should carry our selves more in state, and scorn to do any thing that might misbecome us. We should live more like men, and reason would show it self in all our actions, we should pursue greater and nobler ends, set our thoughts upon better objects, and bestow our Pains, and Time, and Cares to more manly purposes: we should not bury all our thoughts in the Earth, nor make our souls cheap to temptation and sin. 'Tis a sad sign that we know not our selves to be Men (or else we know not what a man is) when we live like beasts, when we are concern'd for our souls as if we had none, and suffer our selves to be govern'd and carried away by Sense, and Appetite, and Passion. If we knew our selves we should give our noblest faculties the highest place in our esteem, and post the rest in their due subordination. We should not let Reason be commanded by the Will, nor the Will by passion, nor our passions by the World and the Flesh. We should not make over the interests of our souls to the wanton desires of the carnal man, as Honour, or Pleasure, or Advantage, (for what of these is so inconsiderable that a soul hath not been sold for?)

But the Saints know their own Excellencies, and it is their happiness that they do so. What were any man the better for the richest treasures in natures store, if he was either ignorant that he had them, or knew not how to prize them? But they have souls of incomparable value and know their worth, and therefore are capable of rejoycing in their own excellencies. How do we pride our selves at the increase of our Estates, at the advance of Titles, which are no accessions to our Natures, but to our Names, or Fortunes. But what an infinite Joy will it be to them to consider that they are *indivisible*, like unto the Angels in perfection, that they are right noble creatures, whose honour is not titular but real, not nominal but personal and essential? That they are rich in the admirable indowments of their minds
and

and Bodies : That they have much of the image and likeness of God in them ; nay that they are in the perfect likeness of the Son of God , who hath taken their nature and will do it the honour to wear it eternally : That they are capable, of partaking of such a happiness as God do's, and of living like him, in a word, that they are such precious beings as are worthy to be the darlings of God, the Joy of of Angels, and the Love and wonder of one another.

2. They are not only acquainted with their Excellencies, but they rightly understand their own happiness. They make no such gross mistakes about it as we do : They do not as *Solomon*, and too many of the World beside, make a multitude of experiments before they fix, and endeavour to settle it upon this pleasure, or that fortune, and wear out their eternity as we do our lives, in folly and disappointment.

But happiness meets and embraces, and entertains them at their very entrance into heaven, from which moment their acquaintance commences and continues for ever : They know that a soul can be happy in nothing but the favour and fellowship of God, and it's own innocence and peace, and what a felicity, what a comfort arises from the sense of these, they likewise know. They are not like those repining, discontented wretches that are in a good condition (better than they deserve) and yet are insensible of it, and unthankful for it ; but he that is least in the Kingdom of God, knows so much happiness in that state, that he neither aspires to be happier, nor envies those that are. The same Light that makes happy, lets them see it ; and as the blind eye enjoys not the comfort of the day, but is benighted at Noon, and in utter darkness when the Sun shines clearest ; So the Glory of God (which is the Light of Heaven) would be no Joy to those that live within its shine, if they did not see the illustrious splendor of it. But the Saints in Light are happy, so happy that they know it, and own it, and ever praise and glorify the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (their blessed Benefactors) for it.

Second-

Secondly, The Blessed in Heaven know one another.

Whether personally or no hath been matter of dispute ; though our Saviour seems to have determin'd it, telling the Jews, *Luk. 13. 28. That they should see Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God,* and what is there in reason that should hinder it? Why may not *Abraham* and *Isaac* (once so nearly related) be again acquainted, and with Joy repeat the History of the intended Sacrifice? Why may not *Moses* and *Aaron* meet, and discourse their old Adventures? Why may not the Blessed Apostles and Holy Martyrs be known to one another, and entertain themselves with gladsome relations, of what they did, and what they suffer'd together? Why may not Friends, that lived like brethren in the Lord, that help't forward each others Salvation, whose souls were mutually dear, who were wont to pray, and advise, and serve God together, and who went to Heaven as it were hand in hand, why I say, may not they embrace and return each other thanks for those Friendly and Christian Offices? Holy *David* cheer'd up his thoughts after the death of his Child with this Meditation, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,* 2 *Sam. 12. 23.* Which had been little comfort, if he had thought never to have known him more. So *St. Augustine* comforted *Italica* an afflicted Widow, who sadly bewail'd the loss of her Husband; assuring her, *That as one day she saw him with her bodily Eyes, but discerned no more then his outward shape and Lineaments, so she should see him again, and in that sight discern the very thoughts of his heart and be intimate to all his Counsels.*

And that's the next thing I am going to say, That the Saints shall be acquainted with each others Thoughts, the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man shall read his Brothers soul. There shall be no subtil reserve, no laying of heads together, no packing of thoughts, no clubbing and combining amongst a few, to provoke the jealousy of all the rest; but every mans breast shall be clear and open, as free from reserve, as it is from design or guile.

Now

Now none but such ingenuous Minds as understand the sacred Charms of trusty Friendship, the Foundation whereof is laid in Vertue and Goodness, are able to conceive, what a wonderful ravishment and comfort it is, for Saints thus freely and securely to unbosom themselves to one another, to think in common, to mingle souls, and to affect and communicate each others joys.

But Thirdly, The fundamental happiness of the Blessed, the glorious Light through which they see and know all things, else is the Knowledge of God. We know him by Hear-say, but they by sight, by near intimacy and acquaintance, but perpetual correspondence and familiarity; they are ever with him, and he never withdraws himself from their observation: Neither doth he appear to them vail'd and vizarded in Mystery and Darknes, but his nature is explained to their understandings: And all those difficulties that so much puzzle and intricat our thoughts, are made easie and familiar. The great problem of the Trinity, the eternal generation of the Son of God, and the procession of the Holy Spirit, such Paradoxes as reason can never unriddle, they are abundantly satisfied in. Those unsoundable depths which turn the Brain and make some Atheists, and others Mad to look into, they are made infinitely happy and wise in the discovery of. They know that which it is a sin for us to look into, and would be our ruin to discover: For can a man see God and Live? No we must die before we can see him as they do and as he is. And certainly this must needs be a prospect infinitely transporting; Did you ever see any thing that pleased you? Did you ever consider any thing that delighted you? Did you ever know any thing that you were glad to know? Or had you ever any rude conceptions of any good thing above your understanding that you desired to know more of! Why sum up all together, and this sight is more than all; more then ever was in the Eye or Imagination of man enough to fulfill all our desires, and to consummate all our Joies.

The

The Eye shall be satisfied with seeing, the Contemplation raviſh'd with conſidering, and the unſatiable thirſt of the ſoul after Knowledge, ſhall be gratified in the higheſt and moſt unſearchable curioſities. In him we ſhall behold ſuch a ſufficiency of all things, that we ſhall deſire to know and enjoy no more; but ſhall ever reſt ſatiſfi'd and at peace in the fruition (not of a force't and artificial contentment, but) of a plenary ſatisfaction of all our hopes and wiſhes: For we ſhall not onely ſee God, but we ſhall ſee him ours, we ſhall ſee our ſelves in the poſſeſſion and embraces of him: We ſhall foreſee a long Eternity before us, in all which we ſhall never be depriv'd of that Bleſſed Viſion, no, not for a moment.

We ſhall ſee God; and nothing in him but what ſhall wonderfully pleaſe us: His Juſtice ſhall not ſtartle us, when we ſhall not only have eſcap't it, but ſhall be rewarded by it: His Pow'r ſhall not make us tremble, for we ſhall be no otherwiſe concern'd in it, then to conſider how happily it ſhall have brought us thither, and how infallibly it ſhall maintain and eternize our happineſs. His Omnſcience ſhall not daunt us, for we ſhall be capable of doing nothing we can be aſham'd of; but the glorious attributes of his Goodneſs and Mercy, of his Love and Tenderneſs, of his Bounty and Good VVill, ſhall ever ſhine upon us in the greateſt manifeſtations. No Frown, no Anger, no Diſpleaſure ſhall ever darken or becloud his ſerene Countenance unto us. And this it is (and more then I can tell you) to be Saints in Light; to ſee God face to face, and to ſee him as he is. *For God is Light and in him is no Darkneſs at all,* 1 John 1. 8. But,

2. This Light diſcovers to the Saints not only the Eſſence of God, but alſo his Will with undoubted certainty and clearneſs. We ſhall not only hear his Voice, but we ſhall ſee his Thoughts, and be acquainted with all his Mind. The Divine Will ſhall be impreſt upon ours, and we ſhall know his Thoughts by our own; his deſires and ours will
look

look the same way; and it shall be always in our Hearts, to do that which he would have done; and to serve him after that manner that we shall be infallibly sure to please him. Our judgments shall be wholly resign'd to his, and we shall approve whatsoever he does or likes of. God and his Saints have but one will, and whatsoever pleases God is legibly written in their own understanding; which must needs greatly contribute to their happiness, for this keeps Heaven in perpetual peace, that there can be no debates, no differences among them; but the judgment of every single member, passes the whole assembly, *Nemine contradicente*, and hath the Royal assent also. This secures the Blessed from all danger of doing amiss, and from the doubts and fears of displeasing: For they serve God after their own Will, and as they please themselves; and what seems right in their own eyes that is also acceptable unto him. This renders all their Duties easie and pleasurable: Whatsoever they do is consistent with their happiness, for God requires nothing but what they are willing to; nothing but what their own thoughts are inclining to. Nay such a mighty force hath the will of God upon theirs, and so strongly are they bent unto all that is good, that they could not be happy if they did it not.

That Duty and Felicity there, are the same thing; and the worship and service of God their unspeakable pleasure and delight.

Thirdly, The Saints are by vertue of that Light in which they dwell, not only acquainted with the Will, but with the Providences of God also. I do not mean that they have an Omniscient understanding of all that God do's in the world: No, this is a point that Papists themselves dare not always stand by though a matter of great service and concernment to them: But my meaning is, that there is nothing in the management of the affairs of Providence, that now we look upon with amazement, and suspicion, as if they were contradictions to the justice and goodness of God; but we shall

be able one day to render an account of a No Holy and Good man, that now groans under the weight of Gods Judgements and knows not why (for when he examines his life with *Job*, he perhaps can find no notorious instances of Guilt; to provoke God thus to express his Vengeance and Indignation against him,) but when he comes to heaven he shall be straight in the Light; and understand the reason of Gods dealing with him; and that there was infinite wisdom and goodness in those proceedings, then he will find that God was just in his dispensations to him; and that he ought to have no quarrel with Providence upon that account; but his soul will bless it's Maker and say with holy *David* Lord I know that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, and it was good for me that I was in trouble. Then all those thwart and uneven Providences, that Reason is confounded, and that Faith staggers at, shall entertain the contemplation of the Saints with singular delight. They will see how God hath traced the Souls of men through a thousand turnings, and by crossing their purposes endeavour'd to chase them from their evil haunts and customs, how his Providence hath lain upon the catch, and watch't to beguile them into the tracks of virtue and holiness. With what holy artifice and stratagem he hath managed the welfare of his Church, and what variety of methods he hath taken to secure both her Religion and Peace: Sometimes fortifying and encouraging her by mercies and kindnesses, and sometimes quite the other way by Judgements and Tryals. Sometimes signaling his Justice in the direct ruine of her Enemies, and sometimes tolling them into a Trap and Snare by success and triumph. How he hath made hopeful causes to defeat themselves, and bring forth contrary effects, and on the other hand brought evil out of good, and made the designs of Devils and bad men, to serve the ends of his mercies and goodness. This is a sweet Theme for Saints to compose their thanksgiving Songs upon; and to praise God for the wonders that he doth for the Children of men.

Lastly, The Saints shall be in the Light concerning the Judge-

Judgements and Decrees of God, which are matters now of such fierce disputes among us. They shall fully understand the nature of the Eternal Covenant between God and Man, and the purposes of the Almighty in the Salvation or Condemnation of Sinners. And let the victory settle on which side it will, yet all parties of the Saints shall then concur in one opinion; and praise and admire the justice and wisdom and goodness of God in the excellent contrivance and management of that important affair; and nothing shall have past between God and us, but we shall be satisfied (howsoever we disputed the matter in the world) that God was in the right, Let him be true and every man a Liar.

And having given you an imperfect account (as every thing we say of Eternity must needs be imperfect) of what the Saints know; I proceed to shew the manner how this knowledge is convey'd into their minds, and unto what degrees of understanding it raises them, to both which I can only answer Negatively.

1. The Saints know immediately, they (and onely they) are above Ordinances, and need not to be thus handed to God because they are always with him.

They need not track the Divine footsteps, (the farthest way) in his Works and Providences, nor study Notions of him out of his Holy Word, nor take impressions from Signs and Sacraments, for they know him infinitely better from the Original, then 'tis possible to do from Copies and Figures. There's no Temple in the new *Jerusalem*, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the Temple of it, *Rev. 21. 22.* They need neither Prayer nor Preaching, neither Offering nor Receiving: For they see more in the face of God then it is possible for these to teach them.

2. They know impartially, they are ignorant of nothing that's fit or possible for them to know. There's no Tree in Paradise forbidden, but what would be the bane of them that tast it. If God have any Reserves of knowledge that he refuses to make over to them, they are either such as

are inconsistent with their Happiness, or with their Being, such as would make them miserable (as the knowledge and sense of Evil) or such as they could not be Men and know. For doubtless God hath left some space, some degrees of perfection between us and Angels; and between them and his own nature, and these have their excellencies and distinctions that the Saints can neither arrive at, nor desire. Now God is so merciful that he will not suffer us to know any thing that may be our ruin; and so just that we may not encroach upon the Prerogative of Angels, which would be theirs. But we shall be as Glorious, as Happy, as knowing in our Kind as they; and as 'tis possible for Men to be: And to be somewhat more than Men, would as much unman us and make us as monstrous and deform'd, as to be somewhat less.

Again 3. As the Saints shall be ignorant of nothing that is fit to be discover'd to them, so they shall erre in nothing that they seem to know. God is the Light by which they see, and he is Truth and can neither deceive them, nor will suffer them to be mistaken. No, he will not mock our fancies with scene and Pageantry, but feed our understandings with blessed Truths. He will not tempt our approaches with apparent Glory, and when we come to lay hold on it, thrust a shadow into our embraces. We shall be where he is, and our eyes shall be opened that we may see him, and he will not shrink up his Beams and Brightness from us, to elude our knowledg; the Glass (the grossness of our Nature) that misrepresented things to our understandings shall be taken away and we shall know our God, and in him all the objects of our felicity as infallibly as we are known of him.

4. We shall know him certainly, without hesitancy or doubtation, we shall not scruple and quære as *John's* Disciples did, *Art thou he, or look we for another?* But we shall be as bold and positive as the convicted Apostle, and say, *My Lord, and my God.*

Thus (Lord) shall we behold thy face in righteousness, and when we awake, after thy likeness, we shall be satisfied with it, And

And now let me prevail with you by the power of this worthy consideration to observe these following instructions.

1. That you let this glory we have been now thinking of, be always seated uppermost in your Thoughts, and let all other interests give place and administer unto it. If you secure this, blessed are you, though you should be unhappy in all things else: This is the great end for which we came into the world; and if we fail in the accomplishment, it had been better for us never to have been born. Methinks this should be a motive of that importance, that it should engage all our Desires, all our Studies, all our Endeavours, in the pursuit of it, That we should be so concern'd, so busi'd and taken up about it, that we should have no leisure to consider the addresses of importunate Temptations, much less any stomach to be prevail'd with by them. Methinks he that hath such a Heaven in his eye should not look upon the World but with contempt and scorn, and think it a great debasement to his reason, to give it any place in his thoughts and affections, that dross and Dung should ever defile that mind, that was made for the contemplation of Heaven now, and for the enjoyment of it at the next remove. How would it daunt and shame the wanton dalliances of the flesh, and make it blush at all fond, unclean proposals, to object against it the Ravishing, but chaste delights of the Saints in Bliss! One serious thought thereof, would confront and baffle the Pleasures and Allurements of sense, and cause the most confident Temptation disgracefully to sink away and vanish. If we were but always arm'd with such Meditations, with what courage should we face and outbrave our present calamities, and Triumph in Affliction and Death it self! With what forward resolution and manly vigor should we press and fight, and make our way through all difficulties; with what eagerness and speed should we run the race, if we did but see the Reward, the Crown, the Joy that is set before us?

2. Let us not endeavour to anticipate Heaven, and to be all-wise before our time, let us not exercise our thoughts

in things that are too high for us : But be contented with such proportions of knowledge as God hath revealed, and enabled us to understand. To what purpose should we puzzle and distract our selves and others with vain disputes about things above us ? 'Tis a dangerous thing to meddle with sacred matters we do not understand, we sin in the very presumption, we may for ought we know commit a second sin in being mistaken and believing a lie, and 'tis seldom seen but we are betrayed into a third ; for such disputes seldom are debated, but with heat and passion, and end in hatred and dissention. Let God alone with his Decrees, &c. And let us mind our own duty, see what part we have in the Covenant, let that be our Study to know and our business to perform. As for Gods part we have no reason to be solicitous about it, further then he hath bin pleased to discover himself. VVe may be assured what lies upon him, shall be faithfully discharg'd, he cannot but do all things well and righteously, and when we come to Heaven we shall know as much : In the mean time let us content our selves with these hopes, and have no ill thoughts of God ; his Judgements are unsearchable, but yet they are Just and Righteous. VVherefore let us entertain no opinions of him that may impeach his Goodness or Equity and render them suspected here, but pray that we may be of the number of those Saints who shall see them brought to Light and clear'd hereafter.

Lastly, Let us chearfully submit to the Providences of God, though we cannot solve them. Let us conclude that God is just in his dispensations, though we be weak and cannot understand them ; though we see not his Reasons in the Government of the VVorld, yet we may know the defects of our own, and thereto ascribe the cause, why several events seem to happen so preposterous and cross. All things work together for good where God has to do, this should establish our confidence, and silence our complaints : and we shall see it though not now ; this should put bounds to our unreasonable curiosity ; let us but wait with Patience until our change come, and then the crooked paths shall be made

made straight, and the rough places plain. Then all accounts between God and us shall be audired and made even, and these Providences that appear so perplex and disproportionate, shall be evidently made out both to our wonder and satisfaction. So that a man shall say, (what a happy experience shall infallibly teach him) *Verily, There is a Reward for the Righteous, Verily he is a God that judgeth in the Earth.* To whom be Glory, &c.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

P. 2. l. 29. r. and that those Pleasures. l. ult. r. rational. p. 3. l. 15. r. these blessed Souls, these dearest. p. 5. l. 28. r. pleasures. p. 8. l. 16. r. extent. l. 18. r. consists. p. 14. l. 24. for to r. so. p. 15. l. 9. r. wanting in : Our Bodies. l. 13. r. our Souls. p. 16. l. 34. r. *ἡδοναί*. p. 17. l. 29. r. makes them happy. p. 19. l. 12. for but perpetual. r. by perpetual.